



Sue Dunbar
209 16th St.
Seal Beach, CA 90740
(562) 260-1418

To the Attention of:

Mark H. Persico, AICP
Director of Development Services
City of Seal Beach
City Hall – 211 Eight St.
Seal Beach, Ca 90740

Re: Written Comments regarding Department of Water and Power
Specific Plan Amendment Environmental Impact Report

The following sets forth in writing the Comments presented by me at the
June 20, 2011 Public Scoping Meeting:

Because of the size and location of the proposed project site, Council and the Planning Commission must take into account the impact as it pertains to existing traffic conditions, the visual impact the proposed development will have on existing public and private vantage points and the impact on safety, security and coastal access to both existing and future residents.

The proposed project site implicates these concerns as a result of the flawed design elements that include (1) the creation of a new road with an entrance from First Street, (2) houses that back to First Street and the adjacent undeveloped land, (3) garages that face the street, (4) the absence of alleys or continuity of alleys, and (6) lack of access to public space.

First, the creation of a new road from First Street, between Central and Marina, will have an adverse impact on existing traffic conditions, as well as pedestrian and bicycle safety, which will create substantial hazards that currently do not exist in the neighborhood. As proposed, traffic will be forced to turn in/out in very close proximity to the current turn lane from First to Marina. With 48 proposed houses, there will be a minimum of 96 cars that will need to enter this proposed development. Even if only 10 cars turned out onto First Street at 7:40 in the morning to take their kids to McGaugh elementary, it will create significant congestion with backed up

traffic and create a dangerous situation for other pedestrians, cars and bicyclists.

Second, the proposed development has an adverse visual impact. The proposed project can be seen from many existing public and private vantage points (from the beach, First Street, Marina, the bike path and across the river). The development should serve to enhance the livability of the existing and proposed neighborhood by creating well-designed and spaced buildings, safe and secure public spaces, and public spaces and right-of-way that incorporate elements of good design. However, the proposed development is inconsistent with existing adjacent development. For example, current residents of First Street will not look across the street to other front-facing houses as is true in the rest of Seal Beach, but instead have to look at the sides of the new proposed houses. Similarly, the views from undeveloped land will be of the backs of houses, or the security walls that will ultimately be erected as barriers between the undeveloped land and those adjacent houses. Finally, as a result of the flawed layout, garages, rather than front doors will be the view for a majority of the residents within this new development – a visual impact quite different from the rest of Old Town.

Third, the proposed development will have an adverse impact on safety, security and coastal access. The fences and walls that will be erected along the lot lines of the houses adjacent to the open undeveloped land will be unsecured spaces that will offer hiding spaces for underage drinking, trash dumping, or sleeping areas for the homeless. The proposed development fails to provide direct coastal access for new or existing residents, instead proposing a private drive that would hinder public access. There is similarly no proposed access to the bike path that runs along the river adjacent to the development. As a result, the proposed development negatively impacts the existing and future community as to safety, security, and coastal access.

There are ways to mitigate the adverse impact of this proposed development on Old Town, which would consist primarily of reorienting the proposed roads and houses to be consistent with current traffic flow and design layout. For example, rather than creating a new road with an entrance from First Street, the developers could extend the current Central Avenue into the development to connect to Marina. This would enhance traffic flow in and out of the development, and give cars sufficient space by which to turn onto First Street and turn onto Marina. It would enhance pedestrian safety by

limiting cross street solely at the Central and Marina intersections, and greatly reduce the traffic congestion that would otherwise result.

By extending Central Avenue into the proposed development, the developers could then reorient the houses adjacent to the undeveloped land so that they face Central Avenue. This would provide visual continuity consistent with the layout of Old Town houses, where front yards are the gathering place for neighbors. It would also eliminate the security concerns raised by the existence of backhouse fences, and instead offer well-lit areas that encourage security, access and legitimate use of the adjacent open lands. This would also allow the placement of alleys behind those homes so that garage access would be from the back, rather than the front. Again consistent with the overall layout of Old Town homes.

Of course, by re-orienting the homes along this new Central Avenue, the developers should also be required to re-orient the remaining lots so that the houses have front doors facing the streets and alleys behind the houses for access to the garages.

These changes would greatly improve the adverse impact this development would otherwise have on traffic, safety, access and continuity with existing adjacent Old Town development.